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ABSTRACT

Contrary to the prevailing view that 1952 was the year of the first nationally televised political conventions, only 32 states had TV stations at that time; nor did the term "TV candidate" originate in the Kennedy (1960) or Nixon (1968) campaigns. In fact, it is Dwight Eisenhower and the campaign of 1956 that deserve this recognition. Contemporary journals, memoirs, and live interviews with members of each party's presidential campaign show that Eisenhower's 1956 election committee was the first to make television the primary component in a presidential campaign, substituting live TV appeals for campaign travel because of the president's ill health. The Republican convention innovated technology and production styles such as on-the-floor interviews, split screens, on-screen vote totals, and teleprompters. Abandoning the traditional whistle stop strategy in favor of select airplane appearances in politically crucial locales, Eisenhower relied on television to achieve blanket exposure. In contrast to the Republicans, Adlai Stevenson, the Democratic candidate, viewed the medium as a necessary evil, used grass-roots campaigning, neglected television strategies, and faltered during TV appearances. Although television's effect on the election outcome cannot be assessed, post-election studies indicate that TV enhanced Eisenhower's image, particularly that of his health, while Stevenson bemoaned the impossibility of making issues during a media influenced campaign. Campaign participants in both parties used their 1956 experience with television in later elections. This and other findings suggest that the 1956 campaign had greater impact on mass media history than previously recognized. (JG)

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History Division

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TV AND THE 1956 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN: INSIGHTS INTO THE EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL TELEVISION

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TV and the 1956 Presidential Campaign:
Insights into the Evolution of Political Television

The 1956 presidential election has not received widespread historical examination. It was one of landslide rather than landmark in which election day concerns seemed foreign rather than domestic, possibly good reasons many political historians generally have passed it by. Yet, the many mass media historians who do likewise are missing an opportunity for an important study. Occurring during a key period in the development of television, the 1956 campaign marked significant ground in the relationship of the medium and politics.

This study examines some key aspects of television's role in the 1956 presidential campaign. Findings come from a review of the New York Times, Time, Newsweek and U.S. News and World Report between May and November 1956, as well other articles in those publications during periods relevant to the topic. Other magazines were consulted from the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature under the heading "Television, Political." The study also draws upon letters, writings and memoirs of Dwight Eisenhower, Adlai Stevenson, Richard Nixon and John Kennedy. In addition, interviews were conducted with some of those involved in the campaign and able to speak on its TV aspects.

This study suggests strongly that this often neglected campaign contains several insights relevant to political TV. Among them is a finding that television was important in Eisenhower's decision to

seek reelection in 1956, and that he subsequently executed a campaign oriented around television. Evidence also sheds light on the troubled television efforts of Stevenson. Furthermore, this study points to the effects of a changing political landscape brought on by television, and indicates that 1956 marked both the end of the traditional "whistle stop" campaign and a leap forward in the recognition of television as a political device.

This study also raises scholarly questions about the common historical practice of regarding certain years as "turning points" in political television. The years 1952, 1960 and 1968 are often viewed this way. However, political TV is better depicted as an on-going evolution, in which neglected years such as 1956 are equally important.

Beyond 1952: The Rapid Growth of Television

Scholars have focused on the 1952 presidential contest between Eisenhower and Stevenson, in part because it was the first to take place after television had reached coast to coast.[1] After 1952, the Radio Corporation of America, a leading TV manufacturer and parent company of NBC, ran a series of advertisements declaring, "Television has brought . . . government back to the people."[2]

Yet, in 1952, "the people" consisted of those in only thirty-seven percent of American homes. A four-year Federal Communications Commission freeze on television station licensing ended on July 1 of that year, and when the Republican Convention convened just six weeks later, television was available on 108 stations in only sixty-two urban areas. Contrary to common perception, the 1952 conventions were not the first televised "nationwide," as only thirty-two states had television stations at that time. In these terms, the years follow-

ing 1952 marked television's greatest period of growth, such that by 1956, 459 stations broadcasted in 243 cities, to an estimated seventy-six percent of households, in all forty-eight states.[3] In 1956, an estimated 60 million people would be able to witness televised presidential politics for the first time.

Television, and political television, grew rapidly in sophistication during this period. In 1953, Eisenhower conducted the first televised presidential news conferences.[4] Television news expanded during this period, with Douglas Edwards of CBS and NBC's John Cameron Swayze becoming nationally accepted as the first network news anchors. It was also the peak of prominence of Edward R. Murrow and his public affairs series "See It Now." Among the topics Murrow examined was the anti-Communist campaign of Sen. Joseph McCarthy, which led to the heavily viewed Army-McCarthy hearings on TV in 1954.[5]

The post-1952 evolution of TV was reflected in a groundswell of opinion, reflection and scientific study. Kurt and Gladys Lang reviewed the 1952 campaign the following year and said of TV, "The newly mobilized medium might become a dynamic force in politics."[6] In 1955 studies, Percy Tannenbaum found a "profound impact of the TV medium,"[7] while Gerhart Weibe forecast "a whole new phenomenon in journalism."[8] The period inspired several books on television, many examining TV's role in politics, including Vance Packard's 1957 best-seller, The Hidden Persuaders. Meanwhile, newspapers and magazines chronicled the growth of TV, attentive to its political implications. An example was a May 26, 1955, editorial in the New York Times on the "injustice" posed by television's rising costs.[9] Later that year U.S. News and World Report devoted fifteen pages to a series of articles entitled, "What TV is Doing to America."[10]

Thus, 1956 dawned during a period of growth in the pervasiveness, use and awareness of television. With the specter of sixty million more viewers than in 1952, the stage was set for new innovations and heightened influence as TV prepared for its next presidential campaign.

The TV Strategy of Eisenhower

If one accepts the notion of a "television candidate," an argument can be made that the "first" such candidate was Eisenhower.

Many historians indeed have written of "TV candidates." Yet, they have found origins in the 1960s. Theodore H. White, in his Pulitzer Prize-winning The Making of the President 1960, promotes television of that year as a "new communications system," with its "exquisite" application central to John Kennedy's election.[11] Joe McGinniss provides a different interpretation in his best-selling book The Selling of the President 1968, which explores the television campaign of Richard Nixon. "[T]his is an electronic election," it reads. "The first there has ever been. TV has the power now."[12] Steve Barkin also advances his discussion of the 1952 TV effort to that same 1968 campaign.[13] Nevertheless, while 1960 and 1968 may mark convenient demarcation lines in political history, they may not be as important in evaluating TV's impact on mass media history.

The campaign of 1956, featuring Eisenhower, must be considered. It was organized by people who apparently charted television's growth and had an understanding of the medium. In addition, television appears to have solved a problem in Eisenhower's 1956 campaign, revolving around Eisenhower's questionable health. Step by step, a presidential campaign was orchestrated in which television was the

primary component.

In mid-1955, as Republican officials laid the groundwork for 1956, there were indications that their priorities had changed from 1952. The 1952 campaign had been supervised by Arthur Summerfield, a Michigan politician with extensive grassroots experience. Although some TV was used in 1952, the campaign still relied primarily on whistle stopping. Using railroad and airplane, Eisenhower went from town to town, ultimately covering 51,000 miles.[15] In 1956, however, control was assumed by Leonard W. Hall, a New York-based political tactician who, like Summerfield, served as chairman of the Republican National Committee. In a September 15, 1955 New York Times article, James Reston stated, "Mr. Hall may not know as much about television as Mr. (Milton) Berle, but he talks about it just as much." Reston described Hall as "an empirical man" who had studied television.[16]

Barkin relates that TV planning in the 1952 Eisenhower campaign was conducted with some secrecy, with even the advertising agency unaware.[17] In 1956, though, television was apparently central to the earliest planning. There may have been an important reason. The Republicans had learned in 1952 that purchasing television time at the lowest rates required the buys be made months in advance.[18] Three major advertising agencies were hired. Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osborn, retained in 1952, was assigned media duties for the Republican National Committee, while Young and Rubicam was added to concentrate on Eisenhower. The Ted Bates Agency also was hired to coordinate television production, as it had in 1952.[19]

As for the process Hall used to select his assistants, Reston remarked, "When he gets a chance to move in a new man he does his best to screen-test him first."[20] Indeed, one of those Hall picked to help

guide the campaign was actor Robert Montgomery. Others included planning director Bob Humphreys, public relations specialist Lou Guylay and Eisenhower's press secretary, James Haggerty, who had supervised the president's TV news conferences.[21]

If the Republicans had visions of a TV campaign when Reston's article appeared, it took an event nine days later to put the idea in sharper focus and suggest the dimensions of what was ahead. On September 24, 1955, while visiting Denver, Eisenhower suffered a heart attack. His convalescence lasted most of the rest of the year,[22] and during this period questions swirled over Eisenhower's abilities to endure another 1952-style campaign.

Raising some of the most serious questions was Eisenhower himself, as his writings from this period suggest he was on the verge of choosing not to seek reelection. The depth of Eisenhower's personal distress is seen in a series of letters to Swede Hazlett, a longtime friend, in late 1955 and early 1956. In acknowledging his inhibitions about the campaign, he wrote on January 23, "I could fill any number of pages with the various considerations pro and con. . . ."[23] Finally on February 29, during a nationally televised address, he told the nation he would run again.

Eisenhower revealed in the Hazlett letters that his uncertainty about Nixon as his possible successor was the main reason for the decision.[24] Nevertheless, Hall had meetings with Eisenhower in early 1956.[25] He indicates there was more behind the decision making,[26]

> In late 1955, when we were talking to President Eisenhower about running for a second term, I told the president he wouldn't have to travel as much as he had in 1952. I maintained that four to five nationwide telecasts would be all that he would have to do. . . . I pointed out he would get the same impact as if he were out meeting people face-to-face.

Furthermore, a key event immediately preceded Eisenhower's decision to run. On January 20, the Republican Party conducted simultaneous $100-a-plate fund raising dinners in fifty-three cities, each site with a TV link allowing Eisenhower to address those in attendance at the various locations. Spotters were hired, and they were asked to report on public reaction. According to Hall, the response was so enthusiastic "we went ahead with our plans to limit his appearances in the 1956 campaign and make each one a major event."[27]

Early indications that Eisenhower's 1956 campaigning would be limited came in his February 29 announcement, touching off speculation in the media about the prospects of a campaign short on personal appearances. On March 2, U.S. News and World Report concluded the president "could win," but noted that the winners in the previous six presidential elections had done some "barnstorming."[28] Newsweek, on March 19, discussed effects of limited campaigning on local Congressional races.[29]

Amid the speculation, campaign planners gathered on May 13 and formally unveiled parts of the strategy. In a front-page New York Times article, headlined "President Plans TV Drive," Republicans were quoted as saying Eisenhower's travels would be minimal, and his campaign would be oriented around different types of live TV appeals. Haggerty declared, "We are in a new age -- an electronic age."[30]

The plan called for Eisenhower to remain mostly in Washington, where he would make several studio-type appearances. Four or five rallies would be held in different cities. Eisenhower would fly in and appear, with the events carried on national television. The strategy also would feature some personal tours by Vice President Nixon and Eisenhower cabinet members.

Why did the Republicans announce their fall campaign plans so far in advance? June 7 provides a clue. On that day, Eisenhower was back in the hospital, suffering an intestinal disorder that required surgery and four weeks of recovery. The Republicans addressed this by providing more information to the media on the TV campaign. Leaders seemed to sense that Eisenhower's health could become an issue, something Eisenhower alludes to in letters to Hazlett on March 2 and August 3.[31] Thus, the Republicans seemed intent on projecting an active, well-organized and bona fide campaign, which was not an excuse for allowing Eisenhower to stay at home when fall arrived.

On June 24 the New York Times reported that the president and Mrs. Eisenhower sang "God Bless America" before TV film cameras as part of a series of appeals being tailored for use in upcoming Congressional campaigns.[32] On July 12, Hall held a news conference and told reporters the president would easily be able to handle the fall activities, that "radio and television will dominate the campaign."[33] On July 15, the New York Times learned of yet another Republican tactic: five-minute TV appeals planned for the end of shortened primetime shows, "calculated to punch home a Republican message before the listener has time to tune in another station."[34] The same report noted the Republicans expected to reach 40 million American homes each week by television during the fall campaign.

While the Republicans shaped their strategy, the changing shape of politics was noted in numerous news accounts and events. Between January and April, 1956, the New York Times carried nine stories concerning television's high cost and apparent ill effects on the political system.[35] Newsweek, Commonweal, and Nation carried similar articles between March and September.[36] On June 15, the Senate

Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce held a week of hearings on TV campaigning, in which committee Chairman Warren Magnuson indicated the rise of television might lead to "drastic legislation."[37]

During the spring and summer of 1956, while Eisenhower's campaign plans were making headlines, Stevenson and Estes Kefauver battled for the Democratic nomination. These men were involved in what was the first nationally-televised debate among presidential candidates. It occurred on May 21, 1956, prior to the Florida primary, and New York Times critic Jack Gould called it ". . . a new experience for the voting viewer."[38] Following several primary election defeats, Kefauver bowed out in July, virtually assuring an Eisenhower-Stevenson contest in the fall. Thus, little drama ensued during the Democratic and Republican conventions, which convened back-to-back in August.

Still, to place the 1956 campaign in proper historical perspective, it is important to examine that year's conventions. Considerable scholarly attention has been given to the 1952 conventions, as they were the first carried coast to coast. Evaluating the second nationally-televised conventions offers a window of sorts on the developing art of political television.

Conventions

Writings and reportage at the time of the 1956 conventions showed widespread interest in television coverage. Weekly news magazines carried regular reports on television's plans, with Newsweek devoting a half page to TV schedules.[39] Business Week, Nation, America and The Reporter carried in-depth articles. Even Popular Science and the teenage magazine Scholastic contributed. Meanwhile, accounts of the political proceedings, in both the news magazines

and newspapers, regularly noted TV's presence.

In 1956, television's response to the conventions not only surpassed that of 1952, but in many ways dwarfed it. Figures from 1952 indicate the networks utilized around 1,000 people in coverage of the two conventions. In 1956, an estimated 2,700 were employed. While in 1952 roughly twenty-five tons of TV equipment was trucked to convention sites, 1956 coverage required sixty tons. Total advertising expenditures jumped from around $7 million in 1952 to $15 million in 1956. On top of this was a dramatic increase in audience size. Average daily viewership of the 1952 conventions was estimated at fifteen million households, compared with the thirty-three million of 1956.[40] "TV's three big networks this week are mobilizing some staggering forces and equipment," reported Time.[41] Newsweek referred to the television effort as the "biggest show in its history."[42]

The "show" was rich in new technology, which was historically significant, because it allowed television to go beyond techniques used in 1952 and assume a style and appearance seen in convention coverage three decades later. The centerpiece was the battery-operated miniature camera. Used for the first time by all three networks, it made possible live interviews from the convention floor.[43] This was augmented by the first use of live cameras set up in hotels and additional points away from the convention hall.[44] Other innovations included split screens, devices for tabulating vote totals and flashing them on home screens and master controls, allowing coverage to be coordinated by a TV director, rather than by the anchor team.[45] There were so many innovations in 1956 that delegates, prior to the convention, were invited into studios of the 167 CBS affiliates for special closed circuit presentations and briefings.[46]

Yet, as in 1952, the 1956 conventions proved a test of the political parties' abilities to coordinate events for optimum television exposure. On August 13, the Democratic Convention opened in Chicago, with instructions to delegates to wear light colors and avoid small prints and big hats.[47] Long familiar red, white and blue bunting in convention hall was replaced by a decor of TV blue (which showed up as a soft grey on the black and white telecasts), and for the first time a set of teleprompters was installed on the rostrum. To quicken the pace, nominating and seconding speeches were reduced five minutes from what had been allowed in 1952, and for the first time, routine polling was conducted away from the convention floor.[48]

Nonetheless, Democratic leadership was not entirely successful in controlling affairs. Perhaps the most noteworthy political event in Chicago was former President Harry Truman's rebuke of Stevenson, which occurred before TV cameras on the second day of the convention.[49] Meanwhile, CBS refused to carry two elaborate TV films in which the Democrats had invested heavily and which were carried by the other networks. In addition, important sessions may have been missed by many viewers because they ran late. The August 15 session concluded at 3 a.m. Eastern time.[50] Kefauver was nominated for vice president the next day, in a session that ended at 12:45 a.m., and by the time Stevenson finished his acceptance speech to end the convention on August 17, it was almost midnight on the East Coast.[51]

The Republican Convention opened in San Francisco on Monday, August 20. Scheduling complaints by the networks were directed at the Republicans, who had an important reason for picking dates in late August. It was felt the fall strategy would be most effective if the campaign was short,[52] and this resulted in the first Republican

Convention since 1888 to be held after that of the Democrats. Like the Democrats, Republican delegates had been given fashion instructions.[53] However, documents strongly suggest there was a greater concern among Republicans about impressions that would be forged via television.

Eisenhower would write in 1965, "The 1952 convention had reinforced my aversion to endless oratory. Further, I felt we would have difficulty in making this convention interesting to the public."[54] On convention eve, the president sent an eight-point directive to Chairman Hall, insisting, "no -- repeat no -- long, dreary speeches."[55] Hall remembered the directive in 1960, and said it contained fourteen points. Ideas Eisenhower raised about television were ones in which Hall concurred,

> We had built our 1956 convention around television, and we learned a lot from the Democrats. I watched the Democratic Convention to learn . . . (and) the Democrats were losing their audience. We planned a convention so that we had no breaks. We set a good pace, and we kept things moving.[56]

Eisenhower and Nixon were renominated. On August 23, in the space of forty-five minutes, both gave acceptance speeches. At 7 p.m. Pacific time, still daylight in San Francisco but prime time in the East and Midwest, the convention adjourned.[57]

Postscripts to the 1956 conventions provide further historical enlightenment as they suggest the novelty of television coverage had worn off, something that twenty-eight years later moved the networks to suspend gavel-to-gavel coverage. Nielsen data indicate that average amounts of time spent by families watching the conventions dropped from twenty-six hours in 1952 to sixteen hours in 1956.[58] In view of the $17 million spent by the networks, the audience figures

were described by Newsweek as "disquieting."[59]

Although relevant, this aspect of 1956 is something probably best included in historical treatment of television news rather than television politics. The same is true of at least two other 1956 convention stories: competition among the networks and a dry-witted young anchor in the NBC anchor booth. The competitive rivalry between ABC, CBS and NBC was described by Time as having "hit a new peak," with NBC using a lip reader to gain a competitive advantage.[60] The young anchor was David Brinkley. Four days after he debuted, New York Times columnist Jack Gould called him, ". . . a heaven-sent appreciation of brevity . . . (who) quite possibly could be the forerunner of a new school of television commentator."[61] Brinkley and 1956 NBC partner Chet Huntley went on to dominate nightly news audience ratings through the next decade.

The 1956 conventions represented mostly the beginnings in the intertwining of television news and television politics. As for TV news, though, it appears there is little of note in 1956 beyond the conventions. Nightly network newscasts consisted of fifteen-minute reports through 1963, and daily coverage of the candidates by television crews was likewise not seen in 1956.[62] Television news reporting from the period between the conventions and election night was highlighted only by interview programs and weekend film summaries. After the campaign Gould contended,

> Once the nominations were made television practically abdicated its journalistic responsibility. . . . The paid political broadcasts are important, to be sure, but they are no substitutes for truly independent reporting of the political scene.[63]

The paid political broadcast was the primary way the campaign was

depicted on television in 1956. In the fall campaign, as it had been all year, the presence of television was noted in the media. As it began, there were two primary questions. Would the Republicans follow through with the television strategy laid out in the spring? If so, how would Stevenson respond?

The Fall Campaign: A Tale of Two Approaches

In presidential elections through the first half of the twentieth century, the town-by-town "whistle stop" campaign was a political mainstay. Candidates would spend days on the road, in regional and often national speaking tours. Railroads provided an efficient mode of transportation, although some town-by-town airplane tours were conducted in 1952. In apparently every presidential election from 1928 to 1952 each of the presidential candidates did at least some touring.[64]

Whistle stopping was more than a tradition. Besides imparting lasting in-person impressions on voters, the physical presence of presidential candidates was seen as an offering to grassroots party leaders, who returned the favor in sustained local support.[65] In presidential politics, this era gave way in 1956 to the "surgical" strategy, in which a candidate used precious personal time only in pivotal locales and utilized the media elsewhere. It required two - things: a mode of transport for ferrying candidates to locales often hundreds of miles apart, and a mass media capable of personal appeal, in lieu of actual personal presence. Both the high-speed airplane and television had been around for years. However, they appear to have been used in tandem, in "surgical" strategy, for the first time by Eisenhower in 1956.

In media history, the television half of the equation is most relevant. Eisenhower's fall campaign wound up close to the way it had been plotted in the spring. Both parties kicked off their campaigns the week of September 10. During the eight weeks that followed, Eisenhower was away from Washington for thirteen days. On six of those days he made national TV appearances. New York Times television listings through this period indicate Eisenhower made seventeen national television appearances. Nixon added to the effort with four appearances, while Thomas Dewey, the 1948 Republican presidential candidate, made three.[65]

As noteworthy as Eisenhower's 1956 TV strategy might be, there is another realm of the 1956 campaign containing possibly more insights into the television politics of the year. Evidence suggests that the Democrats in 1956 were caught in a shifting tide in American politics brought on by television and marked by a candidate who seemed to view the medium, at best, as a necessary evil.

The Democrats struggled with television in 1956. Important TV planning had to be put off until after the party had selected its nominee and a fall strategy had been devised. Meanwhile, the Democrats seemed to have had difficulty in raising large sums of money for television.[66] Furthermore, in late 1955, six major advertising agencies refused requests to handle the account of the Democratic National Committee for fear of offending their Republican clients. Finally in January 1956, the Democrats reached agreement with the small agency of Norman, Craig and Kummel, only after the Republicans had purchased key blocks of fall TV time at the lowest unit costs.[67]

Nevertheless, a major factor shaping the Democrats was Stevenson,

whose personality was ingrained in the 1956 Democratic campaign. As nominee, he insisted on running the campaign,[69] and on August 20 he announced a staff reorganization within the Democratic ranks. Selected as campaign supervisor was James Finnegan, a Pennsylvania political organizer and veteran of the Roosevelt era. William McCormick Blair, a Stevenson aide since 1940, was named staff director, and Clayton Fritchey became press secretary.[70] After a series of meetings, plans for the fall campaign were announced over the Labor Day weekend at the Stevenson home in Libertyville, Illinois. Blair described the strategy as the "greatest grass-roots campaign in all political history."[71]

By September, the Democrats had commitments for over two million dollars worth of network television time.[72] Yet, people close to Stevenson in 1956 recall a lack of central planning around the medium, bringing divisions within the campaign group. Reporting from the period shows the results were often visible when Stevenson stepped before television cameras.

On September 13, the Democrats bought time on all three networks. Stevenson traveled to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where a televised rally was organized to help kickoff the campaign. Stevenson had high personal hopes for the event, in which he called for a "march forward to the New America."[73] What was seen by millions, though, was something much less. James Reston wrote, "He was popeyed in his race with an erratic mechanical teleprompter and so nervous that he even mispronounced the name of his running mate."[74]

William Parmenter Wilson, Stevenson's television supervisor throughout 1956, says the speech in Harrisburg was troubling,[75]

> We tried to plan it so that all the kids would applaud, and then Stevenson would come out. He wouldn't go for it. When he came out, all there was was silence. He wanted to use all the time for his speech.

Wilson remembers that Stevenson also refused advice to practice reading a speech from a teleprompter, something that caused the candidate to lose his place several times. According to Wilson, Stevenson was so upset that he fired the studio director, one of six such people who came and went during the remainder of the Stevenson campaign. The Harrisburg speech, however, was just a portent of things to come.

Stevenson felt he could turn the election by winning fourteen states in which he had narrowly lost to Eisenhower in 1952. During the first week of October he used trains for a series of speeches in Pennsylvania, followed by an airplane and motorcade tour of New Jersey, New York and New England. The following week, he went from town to town along the West Coast. In late October he traveled through the upper Midwest, before beginning another tour of the West. During this period he conducted several five-minute nationally-televised campaign speeches.[76]

As Stevenson moved about, many of those who covered him appeared struck at the extent to which his strategy was not beneficial, at least compared with 1952. Eric Sevareid told a CBS audience on October 8,

> To be sure, he is not producing the ringing documents he produced in '52, which so stunned millions . . . the speaker is not coming across. The failure lies with the candidate himself. In spite of all his platform and studio experiences since then, he is not even reading his speeches as well as he did four years ago.[77]

Gould maintained on October 27,

> The qualities of ideal and inspiration that were detected by his partisans in 1952 have not been evident in this campaign. He has seemed remote and frequently ill at ease; his sense of timing has been very poor.[78]

What might have accounted for these observations? Some of those close to Stevenson in 1956 point today to the grueling campaign. The same people, though, say much of the trouble had to do with Stevenson's frustrations at constantly having to deal with the increased demands of television.

Clayton Fritchey, who observed Stevenson as press secretary, says the candidate had an "instinctive distaste for hype" and anything that would bear on the delivery of his speeches. According to Fritchey, Stevenson liked the idea of the mass audience, but had "dissatisfaction over the technicalities of TV." He recalls,

> He was a successful man, and he realized TV was part of the game. He did the best he could. He didn't like it when he was told a speech had to be rescheduled to a particular city because that was the nearest place we could get TV out of. . . . He always complained about the "damn lights."[79]

Wilson also says it took Stevenson a long time to grasp the audience reach of television. That concept, according to Wilson, had not been emphasized as much in 1952 because fewer people had television that year. In preparing Stevenson for a series of local TV appeals in 1956, in which he chatted in a studio with two or three people, "We ultimately got it into his logic that he was actually speaking to hundreds of thousands of people."[80]

Another person who had close contact with Stevenson was Charles Guggenheim, a TV producer who joined the campaign on October 3 and coordinated several productions, including those at the end of the

campaign. One of the things he remembers was a feeling among staff members that campaign contributions were falling off because of Stevenson's TV appearances.

> He demeaned the process. There wasn't one broadcast when he finished his speech on time. He just faded to black. Later, they blamed me. . . . The difficulty was Stevenson hadn't learned the tools of the trade. The tools had changed radically (in 1956).[81]

The prevalence of television had changed. Yet, a review of some of the actual television appeals suggests "the tools" were not vastly different from those used in 1952.[82] There was an important reason. In 1956, television remained a "live" medium (inexpensive video tape recording was just being introduced that year). Film production, as it had in 1952, received widespread use, in short thirty- and sixty-second spots, as well as longer productions. Still, it was cumbersome, expensive and time consuming,[83] and there was concern about the "saturation" effect of repeating pieces on TV.[84] Live appeals were considered in 1956 as both the most cost-efficient and audience-effective means of television campaigning.

Within the limitations of live television, the differences in the opposing campaign strategies seemed marked. While almost every live appearance made by Stevenson was a speech, the Republicans had a variety of concepts. On October 10, Eisenhower conducted a special television "news conference," substituting questions from reporters with those developed by his campaign staff and asked by handpicked volunteers.[85] On October 12, the Republicans staged a televised party to mark Eisenhower's 66th birthday. James Stewart and Helen Hayes were on hand, in a program that reminded Jack Gould of "This Is Your Life."[86] On October 24, the Republicans bought an hour of daytime TV. Eight women were invited to the White House to take

part in a nationally-televised coffee klatsch with Eisenhower.[87]

One important campaign vehicle introduced in 1956, and noted in many of the accounts of the campaign, was the five-minute "hitch-hike." This was a campaign appeal added to the end of shortened prime time programs. The Republicans pioneered the idea because they felt the public resented preemption of popular programs, and feeling the same way, the three networks and their sponsors cooperated. The New York Times television listings during the fall campaign indicate the Republicans used thirty such productions during prime time. The Democrats used twenty-nine, but many ran early in the campaign.[88]

Except for an hour-long telecast that appeared on election eve, Eisenhower ended his campaign activities the Thursday before the vote. For Stevenson, the final week was the most intensive of the entire year. In a telephone call to party leaders on October 29 he said, "My trip around the country this week has convinced me we are going to win."[89] His campaign concluded with a TV appeal in Boston. Instead of letting his final speech fade to black, the Democrats paid for a couple of costly additional minutes of airtime.[90]

The next day, Eisenhower received fifty-seven percent of the popular vote and carried forty-two states, twenty-eight of which he had not visited during the fall campaign.

Stevenson claimed victory in only two of the forty-two states he visited. New York Times television listings indicate Stevenson made nine major live television appearances, with Kefauver appearing twice.[91] The Republicans wound up spending $3.0 million on television in 1956, while the Democrats spent $2.3 million.[92] Eisenhower was away from Washington thirteen days, and Stevenson was on the road for forty-two days.[93] Including his campaigning prior to the conventions,

Stevenson traveled 75,000 miles in 1956.[34]

Conclusions

The 1956 presidential campaign came to an unanticipated conclusion because of world events, possibly helping explain why the campaign soon was largely forgotten. In late October, efforts to oust communist leadership in Poland touched off unrest throughout that country. On October 31, joint forces of Great Britain and France invaded the Suez Canal after Egypt sealed it off during hostilities with Israel. The day before the election, 200,000 Soviet troops invaded Hungary after the government in Budapest was overthrown. Coverage patterns of the New York Times, Time and Newsweek indicate that national interests in the election's aftermath were subordinated to those dealing with the crises abroad.

What seems a basic question is whether Eisenhower's television strategy contributed to his victory. Answers will not be found in this study. Both Eisenhower and Stevenson indicate they felt the impending foreign crises influenced voting patterns on election day in favor of the Republicans.[35] Beyond this, though, there was the factor of Eisenhower's sheer popularity. He did well in popularity polls throughout the year.[36] Although writings in 1956 suggest the Republicans did not see victory as a foregone conclusion, it appears clear now that the 1956 television strategy was a "low risk" experiment, made possible by Eisenhower's popularity. Had more studies been done immediately after the vote the effectiveness question might be better addressed.

One area that did receive attention was that of the candidates' image projection. After the election, Newsweek quoted Guylay as

saying TV assisted Eisenhower in overcoming the health issue,[97] which was noteworthy because the Republicans had feared the TV strategy might cause voters to see him as sedentary.[98] On TV, Eisenhower was portrayed as a working president during a time of rising international concerns, and his vibrancy during the half-hour live appearances was seen as "destroying the health issue."[99] Indeed, the health issue was raised only once by the Democrats, something that might also have been attributable to Republican efforts to deal with it that spring. Meanwhile, a study conducted by Dan Nimmo and Robert L. Savage found Eisenhower's image traits of "integrity" and "personality" increased in 1956, while those of Stevenson remained the same.[100] This is another revealing finding because many observers felt Eisenhower's speaking ability and on-camera appearance were inferior to those of Stevenson.[101]

The Stevenson campaign likewise inspired review. Stevenson wrote 111 personal letters through the end of the year, many similar to the one on November 17, "I suspect that the lords of Madison Avenue have triumphed."[102] On December 8 he told former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, "I came out of the campaign more than ever convinced that it is all but impossible to make issues during a campaign."[103]

Today, many who were close to Stevenson in 1956 say the candidate's distress at the media was symbolic of the changes in American politics and the Democrats' overall difficulty at grasping them in 1956. Wilson, Stevenson's TV coordinator who would hold similar posts in the campaigns of John Kennedy in 1960 and Robert Kennedy in 1968, says 1956 was "practice" in terms of political TV. Yet, in his opinion, 1956 may be a watershed year in American politics. He points to Stevenson's inner circle, headed by Finnegan, a "machine" politi-

cian considered by Wilson as the "last of the big brokers,"

> Television destroyed that group. People like Finnegan were remarkable. They were friends with every local political leader in the country, but in 1956 you didn't need people like Finnegan anymore. Television meant you could go directly to the people for support. 1956 was really the end of the machine politics.[104]

William McCormick Blair, Stevenson's staff director, was also active in the 1960 Kennedy campaign. He believes that Stevenson would have fared better in 1956 if the Democrats had been able to take television more seriously. He remembers a well organized, spirited and substantive personal campaign on the part of Stevenson. Yet, he also remembers Stevenson becoming "mad as hell" after some encounters with television, darkening the overall effort. Early that fall, Blair referred to the campaign as the "greatest grassroots campaign in history." Today, he feels it may have been the last,

> Stevenson was over scheduled. He would sometimes make sixteen speeches in one day, and he started to not like making the same speech over and over. TV would have helped. . . . In '52 he was unknown. We had to travel because most of the country didn't have TV. In '56 we used the same strategy.[105]

Blair believes much of the difficulty in 1956 would have been alleviated had video tape been available. Editing speeches for playback, he says, could have eliminated Stevenson's problem of running out of time, a source of the much of the frustration.

One of those who appears to have learned something in the 1956 campaign was Nixon, the next Republican presidential candidate. In 1960 he attempted an image campaign projecting statesmanship and family; speeches were replaced by informal appearances.[106] In his memoirs, Nixon counters the popular view that he was naive about television in 1960. He proposed the debates with Kennedy, and he

blames his poor showing in the first debate on a breakdown in communication with his TV advisor. However, Nixon admits in 1960 he was not prepared for the influx of attention given the campaign by television journalists, something not prominent in 1956. Furthermore, Nixon did not substitute television for personal campaigning, which was a mistake, "I wanted to reach as many voters as I could in (the) final days, and television would have been the ideal way."[107]

Evidence strongly suggests that those involved in the next Democratic presidential campaign learned considerably from the TV efforts of Eisenhower and Stevenson. Wilson and Blair were both active in the 1960 Kennedy campaign, and they were not the only Kennedy figures who observed the 1956 campaign first hand. Blair says that during many of Stevenson's 1956 campaign tours Robert Kennedy "sat in the back of the bus, carefully taking notes of the things we were doing right and wrong."[108] Robert Kennedy was a principal organizer of the 1960 Democratic campaign.

John Kennedy himself appears to have drawn on the experiences of 1956. During the Chicago convention, after vying with Kefauver for the vice presidential nomination, he provided Stevenson's nominating speech, something Stevenson saw as a highlight of the convention.[109] Following the 1956 campaign, Kennedy would write,

> The wonders of science and technology have revolutionized the modern American political campaign. . . . nothing compares with the revolutionary impact of television. . . . To the voter and vote-getter alike, TV offers new opportunities, new challenges, and new problems. . . . I side with those who feel its net effect can definitely be for the better.[110]

Here, the historical thread is picked up by authors such as Theodore H. White. In White's The Making of the President 1960, he

sees a "sudden" impact of television that year, which is described in terms of an "explosion," "blast effect" and "revolution."[11] Yet, he is a little late in his history.

Words such as "first time" are used commonly in referring to the role of television in specific presidential campaigns. This study has noted such treatment of the 1952 campaign, White's generalizations about 1960 and those of McGinniss regarding 1968. Indeed, it goes on. In describing the application of electronic TV news gathering in the 1976 campaign, Tom Wolzien maintained "political coverage was transformed."[12]

Each view has merit. Yet, a critical reader of television-era presidential politics develops a sense that for every TV "first," something possibly less significant but nonetheless very similar probably preceded it. Or, the same event occurred later, with greater significance. A point of this study has concerned the difficulty in defining "first," and the danger of viewing events in isolation. The 1956 campaign tends to be viewed in such isolation.

In a descriptive manner, this study has attempted to show how participants in a presidential campaign reacted to television at a vital period in television's history. Findings suggest that important advancements in political television occurred, and in some cases they did not occur. The value of the findings seem not confined to the advancements, or lack of them. Results strongly suggest that the 1956 campaign contained relevant insights into the broad development of political television. The campaign is worthy of consideration, as are those that came before and after. It promotes the idea of an evolutionary process in political television, one in which 1956 may assume added significance as a "missing link."

NOTES

[1] Steve Barkin, "TV Planning in the 1952 Election Campaign," (1981). (AEJMC Paper).

[2] William Harlan Hale, "The Politicians Try Victory Through Air Power," The Reporter, Sept. 6, 1956, 16-20.

[3] Figures pertaining to television's growth between 1952 and 1956 are taken from A.C. Nielsen Co. data appearing in F. Lesley Smith, Perspective on Radio and Television (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), 69-78 and in Leo Bogart, The Age of Television (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1972), 15. Also consulted was Edward W. Chester, Radio, Television and American Politics (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), 98.

[4] The presidential news conferences became so standard after 1953 that Eisenhower was unaware when the networks stopped carrying them live in 1955. See James Reston, "The Fireside Chat," New York Times, May 24, 1956, 16.

[5] See Ernest K. Lindley, "Political Effects of the Hearings," Newsweek, May 10, 1954, 36.

[6] Kurt and Gladys Lang, "The Mass Media and Voting," in Eugene Burdick and Arthur Broadbeck, eds., American Voting Behavior (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1959), 217-235.

[7] Percy Tannenbaum, "What Effect When TV Goes to a Congressional Hearing," Journalism Quarterly 4 (Winter, 1955), 434-440.

[8] Gerhart Weibe, "Radio and Television: Looking Ahead 20 Years," Journalism Quarterly 1 (Spring, 1955), 27-30.

[9] James Reston, "Radio, TV and 1956: An Account of the New Difficulties Facing Broadcasters in the Campaign," New York Times, May 26, 1955, 20.

[10] "What TV is Doing to America," U.S. News and World Report, Sept. 2, 1955, 36-50.

[11] Theodore H. White, The Making of the President 1960, (New York: Signet Publishers, 1961), 127, 318.

[12] Joe McGinniss, The Selling of the President 1968, (New York: Trident Press, 1969), 62.

[13] Barkin, "TV Planning 1952."

[14] Dwight D. Eisenhower, Mandate for Change 1953-1956, (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1963), 58-59. Personal memoirs.

[15] James Reston, "The Busy Republicans," New York Times, Sept. 15, 1955, 19.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Barkin, "TV Planning 1952."

[18] Hale, "Air Power."

[19] Ibid.

[20] Reston, "Busy Republicans."

[21] See Hale, "Air Power," and "Hall To Manage Election Drives," New York Times, Sept. 4, 1956, 18.

[22] Eisenhower, 1953-1956, 535-546.

[23] Letter from Eisenhower to Everett E. (Swede) Hazlett, dated Jan. 23, 1956 in Robert Griffith, ed., Ike's Letters to a Friend: 1941-1958, (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1984), 156-158.

[24] Letter from Eisenhower to Hazlett, dated March 2, 1956, in Griffith, Ike's Letters, 160.

[25] Eisenhower, 1953-1956, 569-570.

[26] Leonard Hall, in a personal review of the 1956 campaign appearing in Life, Apr. 25, 1960, 126-136.

[27] Ibid.

[28] "What Ike Will Do in the Campaign," U.S. News and World Report, March 2, 1956, 19-21.

[29] "Trip to the Statler," Newsweek, March 19, 1956, 33.

[30] "President Plans TV Drive," New York Times, May 14, 1956, 1.

[31] Letters from Eisenhower to Hazlett, dated March 2, 1956 and August 3, 1956, in Griffith, Ike's Letters, 160, 164.

[32] "TV Film Has Duet by Eisenhowers," New York Times, June 24, 1956, 42.

[33] Russell Baker, "Eisenhower Will Go To The Coast," New York Times, July 13, 1956, 1.

[34] ----------, "GOP Campaign Ready to Roll," New York Times, July 15, 1956, sec. B, 7.

[35] New York Times stories on political television finance appeared on Jan. 4; Jan. 8; Feb. 1; Feb. 4; Feb. 8; Feb. 25; Feb. 27; Feb. 29 and Apr. 19.

[36] See Newsweek, July 30, 1956; Commonweal, June 29, 1956 and Nation, March 17, 1956.

[37] Jack Gould, "Magnuson Scores TV Campaign Cost," New York Times, June 16, 1956, 39.

[38] ----------, "TV: Political Politeness," New York Times, May 22, 1956, 67.

[39] "Chicago for Looking and Listening," Newsweek, Aug. 13, 1956, 32 and "San Francisco: Looking and Listening," Newsweek, Aug. 20, 1956.

[40] Figures used in comparing television coverage of the 1952 and 1956 conventions are taken from "Television Convention," Newsweek, July 14, 1952, 85; "One Big Stage," Time, July 25, 1952, 38-41; "The 120 Million Audience," Time, Aug. 13, 1956, 36; and "Preview Convention '56: TV and Radio," Newsweek, Aug. 13, 1956, 33.

[41] "120 Million Audience," Time.

[42] "Preview '56," Newsweek.

[43] "What It Takes to Stage a Convention in the Age of Television," Business Week, Aug. 4, 1956, 50-52.

[44] Edward D. Fales, Jr., "New Tricks to Cover the Conventions," Popular Science, Aug, 1956, 80-83.

[45] "120 Million Audience," Time.

[46] Ibid.

[47] "TV Fashion Advice," New York Times, Aug. 4, 1956, 34.

[48] "Preview '56," Newsweek.

[49] "Harry's Happy Hour," Time, Aug. 20, 1956, 9.

[50] William S. White, "Democrats Vote Accord on Rights," New York Times, Aug. 16, 1956, 1.

[51] W.H. Lawrence, "Bay Stater Nearly In When Stampede To Rival Set Off," New York Times, Aug. 18, 1956, 1.

[52] See Dwight D. Eisenhower, Waging Peace 1956-1961, (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1965), 18-19. Personal memoirs.

[53] "120 Million Audience," Time.

[54] Eisenhower, 1956-1961, 12.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Hall, Life review.

[57] W.H. Lawrence, "Eisenhower Vows Quest for Peace," New York Times, Aug. 24, 1956, 1.

[58] Bogart, Age of Television, 234.

[59] "Were You Watching," Newsweek, Sept. 9, 1956, 54.

[60] "The Biggest Studio," Time, Aug. 27, 1956, 43.

[61] Jack Gould, "TV: Witty Commentator," New York Times, Aug. 17, 1956, 43.

[62] Timothy Crouse, The Boys on the Bus, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1972), 151.

[63] Jack Gould, "Campaign on TV," New York Times, Oct. 28, 1956, sec. X, 13.

[64] Information on whistle stopping activities of presidential candidates is taken from appropriate annual editions of The New International Yearbook, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company), under the heading "Elections, United States." Other information appears in Stephen J. Wayne, The Road to the White House, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), 156-159 and in "What Ike Will Do in the Campaign," U.S. News and World Report, March 2, 1956, 19-21.

[65] William Parmenter Wilson, telephone interview, New York, N.Y., Feb. 26, 1987.

[66] See "On Television," New York Times, Sept. 10-Nov. 5, 1956.

[67] Discussion regarding the Democrats' fund raising appears in Hale, "Air Power," as well as "Madison Ave.'s Hand in Politics," Business Week, June 30, 1956, 93-96, and "TV Still Isn't Everything," Business Week, Sept. 8, 1956, 32-33.

[68] Hale, "Air Power."

[69] William McCormick Blair, "Stevenson is Expected to Name Fritchey as His Press Secretary," New York Times, Aug. 21, 1956, 1.

[70] Ibid.

[71] William McCormick Blair, "Stevenson Tour Outlines New Tactics for Campaign," New York Times, Sept. 2, sec. B, 7.

[72] "TV Isn't Everything," Business Week.

[73] Adlai E. Stevenson, in Walter Johnson, ed., The Papers of Adlai E. Stevenson, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1976), 215-220.

[74] James Reston, "Washington 'Via Ovicapitum Dura Est'* -- Stevenson," New York Times, Sept. 16, 1956, sec. E, 12.

[75] Wilson interview.

[76] The summary of Stevenson's campaign travels is drawn from a review of the New York Times between Sept. 10 and Nov. 6, 1955.

[77] Part of a transcript of Sevareid's commentary appears in Stevenson's papers, 200.

[78] Gould, "Campaign on TV."

[79] Clayton Fritchey, telephone interview, Washington, D.C., Feb. 26, 1987.

[80] Wilson interview.

[81] Charles Guggenheim, telephone interview, Washington, D.C., Feb. 4, 1987.

[82] Some of the filmed television spots used in the 1956 campaign appear in Charles Grinker and Sanford K. Fisher, exec. prods., "Walk Through the Twentieth Century," narr. Bill Moyers, PBS, Aug. 8, 1984.

[83] Wilson interview.

[84] Hale, "Air Power."

[85] Russell Baker, "100 to Question President on TV In a 'Citizen Press Conference,'" New York Times, Oct. 11, 1956, 1.

[86] Jack Gould, "TV: Campaign Highlights," New York Times, Oct. 13, 1956, 51.

[87] Eisenhower, 1956-1961, 65.

[88] See "On Television," New York Times, Oct. 3-Nov. 5, 1956.

[89] Phone call from Stevenson to Democratic state chairmen, Oct. 29, 1956, transcript appearing in Stevenson, Papers.

[90] William McCormick Blair, telephone interview, Los Angeles, Calif., Feb. 26, 1987.

[91] See "On Television," New York Times, Sept. 10-Nov. 5, 1956.

[92] Figures appear in Bogart, Age of Television, 242, and Chester, Radio and Television, 103.

[93] The numbers of days Eisenhower and Stevenson were on road was determined by a review of New York Times articles between Sept. 10 and Nov. 6, 1956.

[94] Stevenson, Papers, 200.

[95] See letter from Eisenhower to Hazlett, dated Nov. 2, 1956, in Griffith, Ike's Letters, 172-176, and letter from Stevenson to Reinhold Niebuhr, dated Nov. 14, 1956, in Stevenson, Papers, 340.

[96] See "The Gallup Scoreboard," Newsweek, Aug. 20, 1956, 31.

[97] "The Electronic Election," Newsweek, Nov. 19, 1956, 122-123.

[98] Letter from Eisenhower to Hazlett, dated Nov. 2, 1956, in Griffith, Ike's Letters, 172-176.

[99] "The Electronic Election," Newsweek, Nov. 19, 1956, 122-123.

[100] Dan Nimmo and Robert L. Savage, Candidates and Their Images, (Pacific Palisades, Calif.: Goodyear Publishing Company, 1976), 49.

[101] Fritchey interview.

[102] Letter from Stevenson to Rabbi Jacob J. Weinstein, dated Nov. 17, 1956, in Stevenson, Papers, 350.

[103] Letter from Stevenson to Dean Acheson, dated Dec. 8, 1956, in Stevenson, Papers, 380.

[104] Wilson interview.

[105] Blair interview.

[106] White, 1960, 300-301.

[107] See Richard Nixon, RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon, (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978), 219, 221.

[108] Blair interview.

[109] Letter from Stevenson to Dore Schary, dated Aug. 31, 1956, in Stevenson, Papers, 206.

[110] John F. Kennedy, "A Force That Has Changed the Political Scene," TV Guide, Nov. 14, 1959.

[111] White, 1960, 317, 318.

[112] Tom Wolzien, "Taming the Technology: A Man Who Was There," in Richard D. Yoakam and Charles F. Cremer, ENG: Television News and the New Technology, (New York, Random House, 1985), 25.